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Sociology of the Quran Part I

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Table of Contents

Translator's Preface

This is the first part of Martyr Murtada Mutahhari's book Society and History (Jami`e wa tarikhh), which is itself a part of his important work Introduction to the Islamic World Outlook (Muqaddameh'i bar jahan bini ye Islami) [1]

In this section on society, the author discusses various viewpoints regarding the relationship between individual and society, and explains the Qur'anic viewpoint. Then he goes on to discuss such issues as social freedom and determinism, class division and social polarization, social pluralism and homogeneity, and the future of human societies.

The second part of the book about history and the philosophy of history from the viewpoint of the Qur'an will appear 'in sha' Allah in the future issues of Al-Tawhid.

Note

1. Jahan bini ye tawhidi ("The World view of Tawhid") is another of Martyr Murtada Mutahhari's books which also, like the present work, is a part of Muqad-dameh a bar jahan bini-ye Islami ("Introduction to the World Outlook of Islam"). (Tr.)

Introduction

The outlook of a school of thought regarding society and history and its specific approach to them, plays a decisive role in its ideology. From this point of view, it is essential, in the context of Islamic world outlook, to throw light on the Islamic approach to society and history.

It is evident that Islam is neither a theory of society nor a philo-sophy of history. In the sacred Book of Islam, no social or historical problem is dealt with in the technical jargon of sociology and philo-sophy of history. In the same way no other problem, ethical, legal or philosophical, is discussed in the Qur'an, either in the current terms or according to the traditional classification of sciences. However, these and other problems related with various sciences can be deduced from the Book.

Islamic thinking on society and history, because of its special importance, is a topic that deserves to be studied and investigated pro-perly, and, like its many other teachings, reveals Islam's profound-ness in dealing with various issues. Since the problems that deal with society and history are closely related, and since we wish to discuss them briefly, it was apt to discuss them together in a single book. How-ever, we shall discuss the problem related to society and history only to the extent that would help in understanding Islamic ideology.

We shall begin with society and then proceed to discuss history. Following are some of the questions that can be raised about society:

1. What is society?

2. Is man by nature social and gregarious?

3. Is it true that the individual is primary and society is secondary, or is the truth contrary to it, that is, society is primary and individual is secondary in importance? Or is there any third possible approach?

4. The relationship between society and tradition.

5. Whether the individual is free or if he is determined by society and the social structure?

6. In what institutions, poles, and groups is society classifiable according to its primary divisions?

7. Whether human societies are absolutely of the same nature and essence, their differences being similar to the differences among mem-bers of the same species? Or if they vary according to geographic varia-tions, temporal and spatial conditions, and levels of development of their culture and civilization, assuming different forms and essences with each calling for a separate sociology based upon its particular ideology?

In other words, is a single system of sociology, ethics, and ideology applicable to all humanity, in the same way as a single system of medicine and laws of physiology applies to all human beings regard-less of their geographic, racial and historical variations?

Does every society, according to its regional, cultural and histori-cal background, require a special sociology and affirm a particular ideo-logy?

8. Are human societies, which from the dawn of history up to the present day have been diversified and grown independent of one another, with a kind of pluralism governing them (at least in an indivi-dual if not in a

generic sense), moving from plurality and diversity towards attainment of unity and homogeneity?

Does the future of humanity lie in attaining one society, one culture and one civilization, and whether at the end its plurality will be replaced by a stage of homogeneity in which all its contradictions and conflicts would be overcome and resolved? Or, contrarily, is humanity eternally con-demned to multiplicity of culture and ideology, and to a pluralism that reinforces the social identity of its particular, units?

In our view, these are the relevant problems which need to be discussed from the Islamic point of view, so that these issues are brought to light and put in a proper perspective. We propose to deal briefly with these issues one by one.

What is Society?

A society consists of groups of human beings who are linked together by means of specific systems and customs, rites and laws, and have a collective social existence. Collective life is that in which groups of people live together in a particular region, and share the same climate and similar foodstuffs.

Trees of a garden also `live' together and share the same climate and the same kind of nourishment. In the same manner, gazelles of a herd also graze together, and migrate toge-ther from place to place. But neither trees nor gazelles can be said to have a social life, as they do not form a society.

Human life is social in the sense that it is essentially gregarious. On the one hand human needs, benefits, satisfactions, work, and acti-vity are social in essence, and the social system cannot be maintained but through division of labour, division of profits and a shared common satisfaction of needs within a particular set of traditions and systems.

On the other hand, specific ideas and ideals, temperaments, and habits govern human beings in general, giving them a sense of unity and integ-ration. In other words, society represents a group of human beings, who, under the compulsion of a series of requirements and under the in-fluence of a set of beliefs, ideals and goals, are amalgamated with one another and are immersed in a continuum of collective life.

The common social interests, and particular ties of human life unite human beings together, giving to every individual a sense of unity similar to that experienced by a group of people travelling together in an automobile or an Aeroplane or a Boat, heading towards the same destination, and sharing together the common hope of reaching the destination safely, the dangers of the way, and a common fate.

How beautifully the Prophet of Islam (saws) has described the philo-sophy of `enjoining right conduct and forbidding indecency' (al-'amr bil ma'ruf wa nahy `an al-munkar) by means of the following parable:

A group of people board a ship that sets sail on the sea tearing apart the waves. Every one of them has a seat reserved for him. One of the travellers claiming that the seat occupied by him belonged to none other than him, starts making a hole under his seat with a sharp tool. Unless all the travellers immediately hold his hand and make him desist from doing so, they would risk drowning not only themselves but would also fail to save the poor wretch from being drowned.

Is Man Social by Nature?

The problem regarding the factors responsible for the emergence of social life in human beings has been raised from the ancient times. Is man born with the instinct of gregariousness, i.e. whether he was naturally created as a part of a whole, with an urge in his nature to be united with the whole or if he was not created as a gregarious being, but external compulsions and determinism imposed upon him a collective life?

In other words, is he by nature inclined to live freely, and is disposed not to accept any kind of obligations and restrictions which have been imposed upon him, although they may be essential for social life? Has he in fact learnt from experience that no one is able to continue one's life in isolation, and so he has been forced to surrender to limitations imposed by social life?

Or, although he is not gregarious by nature, the factor that persuaded him to accept social existence was not compulsion, or at least compulsion had not been the sole factor? Or, was it by the ruling of his reason and through his faculty of calculation that he arrived at the conclusion that only through co-operation and social life could he better enjoy the gifts of nature, and, therefore, he chose to live in company with other human beings? Accordingly, the problem can be posed in three ways.

(1) Man is social by nature.

(2) He is social by compulsion.

(3) He is social by his own choice.

According to the first theory, man's social life is similar to the partnership of a man and a woman in married life each of the partners was created as a part of a whole and by nature yearns to be united with the whole. According to the second theory, social life is like co-operation, such as a pact between two countries which are singly unable to defend themselves against a common enemy and are forced to work out an agreement of co-operation and collaboration. According to the third theory, social life is similar to the partnership of two capitalists, which gives rise to a commercial, agricultural or industrial company aiming at attainment of greater profits.

On the basis of the first theory, the main factor is inherent in man's own nature itself. On the basis of the second theory, it is some-thing external to man's essence and independent of it. And according to the third theory, the main factor responsible for social life is man's intellectual and calculating faculty.

According to the first view, sociability is a general and universal goal which man naturally aspires to attain. According to the second theory, sociability is a casual and accidental phenomenon, a secondary and not a primary objective. According to the third theory, sociability is the result of man's faculty of reasoning and calculation.

It may be said on the basis of the study of the Qur'anic verses that sociability is inherent in the very nature and creation of man. In the Surah al Hujurat the Qur'an says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ..

"O mankind! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes, that you may know one another [not that on account of this you may boast of being superior to others]. Certainly, the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the most God-fearing among you" (49:13)

In this verse, besides an ethical precept, there is an implication which indicates the philosophy of social existence of man, according to which mankind is so created that it always lives in the form of groups, nations and tribes, and an individual is known through his relation to his respective nation and tribe an identity which is an integ-ral part of social existence. If these relations which in one way, are the cause of commonness and association between individual men, and, in the other way, are the cause of their separation and dissociation did not exist, it would have been impossible to distinguish one man from another.

As a consequence, social life, which is the basis of relationships of human beings with one another, would not have come into existence. These and similar other factors in social life, such as differences in features, colour, and physique, provide the ground for specific marks of distinction of an individual and impart individuality to persons.

Had all the individuals been of the same colour, features, and physique, and had they not been governed by different types of relationships and associa-tions, they would have been like the standardized products of a factory, identical to one another, and consequently could not be distinguished from one another.

It would have ultimately resulted in the negation of social life, which is based upon relations and exchange of ideas, labour and commodities. Hence, association of individuals with tribes and groups has a natural purpose. The individual differences among human beings serve as an essential condition of social life. It must not, how-ever, be used as a pretext for prejudice and pride; for superiority is supposed to lie in human nobility and an individual's piety.

In verse 54 of Surah al-Furqan, the Qur'an states:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهُ نَسَبًا وَصِهْرًا

"And He it is who hath created man from water, and hath appointed for him kindred by blood [relationships by birth] and kindred by marriage [ac-quired relationships]." (25:54)

This verse reveals the purpose of birth relationship and marriage -relationship, which together bind individuals with each other, as under-lying the design of creation. It is through these relationships that indivi-duals are distinguished from one another.

In Surat al-Zukhruf, verse 32, it is stated:

أَهُمْ يَقْسِمُونَ رَحْمَتَ رَبِّكَ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُم مَّعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُم بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ

"Is it they who apportion their Lord's mercy? We have appointed among them their livelihood in the life of the world and raised some of them above others in rank, that some of them may tape labour from others, and the mercy of thy Lord is better than [the wealth] that they amass. "(43:32)

While discussing the conception of Tawhid (Divine Unity), in the part dealing with the world outlook of Tawhid, I have dealt with the meaning of this verse. Here I will give just the substance of the verse. Human beings have not been created alike in respect of their talents and dispositions. Had they been created so, everyone would have possessed the same qualities and all would have lacked diversity of talents. Naturally, as a consequence, none would have required the services of others, thus making mutual co-operation and mutual obligations meaningless.

God has created man in diversity with different spiritual, physical, and intellectual aptitudes, dispositions, and inclinations. He has given some people special abilities, and has imparted superiority to some over others in certain talents. By means of this, He has made all human beings intrinsically needful of others and inclined to associate with others. Thus He has laid down the foundation of collective and social life. The above mentioned verse also asserts that social existence is not merely a conventional or selective or a compulsive affair, but a natural one.

Does Society have an Essential and Independent Existence?

Society is composed of individuals, without individuals a society does not exist. What is the manner of this synthesis? How is an indivi-dual related to society, and what kind of relationship is it? Let us take into consideration the following views:

First View

Society is constituted of individuals. This is merely a hypostatized synthesis i.e. a synthesis does not exist in reality. An objective synthe-sis takes place when a series of elements influence one another, and when there is a reciprocal and mutual relation of action and reaction between the elements. These actions and reactions prepare the ground for the emergence of a new phenomenon with its own specific. Characteris-tics, as observed in the case of a chemical synthesis.

For example, due to the action and reaction of the two gases, oxygen and hydrogen, for example, a new compound, namely, water, is produced with a new form and a new set of properties. The essential condition for a real synthesis is that the constituent elements are merged into one another in the process of synthesis, giving up their individual nature and pro-perties, to bring into existence a new substance: the compound.

In collective life, human beings never merge with one another in this way, and a society does not represent anything like a `unified man'. Thus, society does not possess an essential and independent existence, but a secondary and a hypostatized one. It is the individual alone who has independent, real, and essential existence. So, although human life in society does have a collective form and colour, but members of society do not merge to form a real compound called `society'.

Second View

In reality, society cannot be compared to the natural com-pounds, it is an artificial compound. An artificial compound is a kind of compound although it is not a natural one. An artificial compound, like a machine, is a system of interrelated parts. In a chemical com-pound, the constituent elements lose their identity, and dissolve in the `whole' and essentially lose their individuality. But in an artificial com-pound, the components do not lose their identity; they just surrender their independence.

The components are interconnected and related in such a way that the effect of the resultant product is quite different from the sum total of the individual effects of its ingredients. For example, an automobile carries persons or things with a great speed from one place to another. Its mobility and speed cannot be attributed to the sum of individual performance of its parts when considered as in-dependent and disconnected from one another.

There is a sort of co-ordination and coherence between its parts, which is artificial and im-posed from without. However, merger of identities of the ingredients in the `whole' does not take place. Yet, the whole does not exist with-out its constituent parts. The whole is the sum total of its parts in addition to the specific connections and relations among them.

Society, in the same manner, is comprised of several primary and secondary organizations and bodies. These organizations and the indivi-duals who are connected with them, all are inseparably related with one another. Any changes in any one of these institutions cultural, religious, economic, legal or educational bring about changes in other institu-tions also. Thus, social life is a phenomenon dependent on the social machinery. But in this process, neither the identity of individuals nor that of institutions is dissolved completely in the society as a whole.

Third View

Society is a real compound like the natural compounds. But the synthesis here is of minds and thoughts and of wills and wishes; the synthesis is cultural and not physical. Like the material elements, which in the process of action and reaction, reduction and dissolution in one another, prepare the ground for the emergence of a new substance, and due to this re-organization a new compound comes into existence and the elements continue their existence with a new identity, individuals also, who enter into social life with their gifts acquired from nature and their inborn abilities, spiritually merge into one another to attain a new spiritual identity, which is termed the `social spirit'.

This synthesis itself is unique and special, with no parallel in the universe. Since the components do affect and influence one another and are transformed by mutual effect to acquire a new personality, this synthesis is a natural and real synthesis. However, in this case, the `whole' or the `compound' does not exist as a single physical entity. It is different from other com-pounds in the sense that in other natural compounds the synthesis is physical and the components influence and affects one another to the extent of acquiring a totally new identity, and the compound becomes a single indivisible entity, a real unit. The multiplicity of constituents is dissolved and transformed into the unity of the compound.

But in the synthesis of society and individual, though an actual synthesis takes place because, the constituents, the individuals, as a result of their interaction, attain a new form and identity the plurality of individuals is not converted into a unity. This synthesis does not produce anything like a `unified man', a physical entity in which all individuals have physically merged. Society conceived as a single physi-cal entity is only a hypostatized abstraction.

Fourth View

Society is a real compound of a higher order than a natural compound. In the case of natural compounds, the constituents have their own individuality and identity before the synthesis occurs. During the process of their action and reaction, conditions for emergence of a new substance are produced. However, the human individual did not possess any kind of individuality at the stage of pre-social existence.

At that stage, he is like an empty container capable only of embracing the social spirit. Without social existence, human beings are absolutely like animals, with the only difference that they possess human apti-tudes. The humanity of a human being i.e. his feeling of being a human being, his

consciousness of his human `egohood', thought, human likes and dislikes, and other emotions and feelings associated with man originates under the influence of the social spirit.

It is the social spirit that fills this empty pot and confers personality upon a person. The social spirit has always been co-existing with man and shall co-exist with him forever through its manifestations such as morality, religion, education, philosophy, and art. The cultural and spiritual causes and effects, actions and reactions among the individuals take a specific shape due to the influence of the social spirit.

Hence, they are not prior to it. In fact sociology is prior to human psychology. This view is contrary to the former view, which accepts the possibility of human psychology even before the stage of social existence, and regards sociology as belonging to a later development. According to this view, if man had not acquired social existence and sociology, he would not have reached the stage of acquiring human psyche and human psycho-logy.

The first theory is a theory maintaining the priority of individual because, according to it, neither society has a real existence, nor law, custom nor social destiny have an independent reality. Only individuals have an objective existence and are knowable objects in an epistemolo-gical sense. The life and destiny of every individual is independent of that of other individuals.

The second theory is also a theory of the priority of individual. It does not recognize the society as an independent `whole', and also denies an objective synthesis of individuals as a necessary condition of social existence. But it considers the relationship among individuals as somewhat objective, although confined to physical association.

Accord-ing to this theory, whereas society does not have an existence indepen-dent of individuals, the individual alone has a real and objective exis-tence. But according to this view, individuals, being the constituents of a society, share a common destiny just as the components of a machine or an automobile are related and linked together in the form of a mechanical association of cause and effect, their movements being mechanically interlinked. Moreover, society-that is the group of inter- related and interconnected individuals-from the point of view of its specific system of mechanical cause-and-effect relationships, has an identity independent of its individual parts.

The third theory, however, emphasizes the reality of individual as well as that of society. This theory recognizes the independent exis-tence of individuals because, according to it, the existence of com-ponents of society (individuals) is not merged into the existence of society. It, also, does not accept any unified existence for society like that of chemical compounds. At the same time, it recognizes the objec-tive reality of society, because it considers the synthesis of individuals similar to a chemical synthesis with regard to their spiritual and intel-lectual makeup.

As a result of this synthesis, individuals acquire a new identity, which is the dominant character of society-although society is not a physically unified entity. On the basis of this theory, due to the process of interaction

between the parts, an entirely new entity has emerged: a new spirit, a new consciousness, and a new will, which is over and above the intelligence, consciousness and will of the indivi-duals, and which dominates the intelligence and consciousness of all its individual members.

The fourth theory believes in the essentiality and absoluteness of social reality. According to this theory, whatever exists is the collective spirit, the collective consciousness, the collective sensibility, the collec-tive will, and the collective `self'. Individual consciousness is nothing but a manifestation of the collective consciousness.

The Qur'anic View

The verses of the Holy Qur'an confirm the third view. As I have stated earlier, the Qur'an does not discuss human problems in our philo-sophical and scientific terminology. Its language and approach is dif-ferent. Nevertheless, the Qur'an views the problems concerning society in such a way that it supports the third view. The Qur'an puts forward the idea of a common history, a common destiny, a common record of deeds, a common consciousness, understanding, sensibility and a com-mon conduct for the ummahs (societies) [1]

It is obvious that if the entity referred to as `ummah' did not have an objective existence, it would be meaningless to talk of fate, understanding, conscience, obedience, and disobedience with reference to it. It may be inferred that the Qur'an believes in a certain kind of life which is the collective and social existence. Collective life is not just a metaphor or an alle-gory, it is a reality likewise collective death is also a reality.

In verse 34 of Surat al-'A`raf, the Qur'an asserts:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ

"And every ummah (society) hath its term, and when its term cometh, they cannot put it off an hour nor yet advance (it)." (7:34)

This verse refers to life and existence that is given a limited period of time, the duration of which cannot be changed. The end can neither be advanced nor delayed; and this life is associated with the nation (ummah), not with the individuals; or else it is evident that individuals of a nation are deprived of their existence individually and separately and not collectively and simultaneously.

In Surat al-Jathiyah, the verse 28 states:

كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ تُدْعَىٰ إِلَىٰ كِتَابِهَا.

"Every ummah (society) shall be summoned to its record." (45:28)

Thereupon we come to know that not only individuals have a particular record of deeds of their own, but societies are also judged by their own records of deeds, because they, too, are like living beings who are conscious, responsible, and accountable for their acts, as they have freedom of will and act accordingly.

In Surat al-'An`am, verse 108 states:

زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ

"Unto every nation have we made their deeds seem fair" (6:108)

This verse affirms that every nation evolves its own particular consciousness, its own particular standards and its own particular way of thinking. The consciousness, understanding, and perception of every nation has a specific and distinguishable character.

Every nation judges things according to its own standards (at least in the matters involving practical values and notions every nation has its own special way of perception and comprehension. There are many acts which are `good' in the eyes of one nation and `evil' in the eyes of another. It is the social atmosphere that moulds the taste and percep-tion of the individuals of a nation according to its value-system.

In Surat al-Mu'min, verse 5 says:

وَ هَمَّتْ كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ بِرَسُولِهِمْ لِيَأْخُذُوهُ وَجَادَلُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوا بِهِ الْحَقَّ فَأَخَذْتُهُمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ

"....And every nation purposed to seize their messenger and argued falsely, [thinking] thereby to refute the Truth. Then I seized, and how [awful] was my punishment. "(40:5)

This verse is about an unrighteous resolution and decision of a nation. It refers to a collective decision of immoral opposition to truth, and asserts that collective disobedience deserves collective retribution and punishment.

In the Qur'an, there are frequent instances how the actions of an individual are attributed to the whole group, or sins of a generation are associated with later generations. [2]

In such cases, the people had the same (collective) thinking and the same (collective) will, or, in other words, they had the same social spirit. For example, in the story of the Thamud, the act of hamstringing Salih's camel, which was the deed of an individual alone, is attributed to the whole nation فَعَقَرُوهَا (they ham-strung the she camel).

The whole nation was considered to be respon-sible for the crime. Consequently all of them were considered to deserve the punishment for committing that crime فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ (so Allah doomed them for that sin).

'Ali (as), in one of the sermons of the Nahj al-balaghah, elucidates this subject in the following manner:

أَيُها النّاسُ إِنّما يَجْمَعُ النّاسَ الرِضا وَ السَخَطُ.

O people, actually that which brings together a community [and imparts unity and a common fate to it], is the common feeling of approval and disapproval.

Whenever any proper or improper action having collective appro-val has been performed, even though by a single individual, the whole society is held responsible for it.

إِنَّما عَقَرَ ناقَةَ ثَمُود رَجُلٌ واحِدٌ فَعَمَّهُمْ اللهُ بالعَذابِ لما عَمّوهُ بِالرِضّا فقالَ فَعَقَرُوها فَأَصْبَحُوا نادِمين.

Indeed only one man had hamstrung the she-camel of Thamud, but God included them all in His punishment, because they all condoned his act. So, God has said (in the Qur'an)

"They hamstrung her and woke up repentant."

God sent down His punishment collectively on the people of Thamud, because the whole nation maintained the same position and approved the act of one individual, and when his decision was enacted, it was actually the decision of the whole nation. God, in His Book, has attributed the act of hamstringing of the camel to the whole nation, although the act was performed by one person. It says: "That nation hamstrung the camel," and does not say that one person from among them committed the sin.

It is essential to remind here that mere approval of a sin, as long as it remains a verbal approval alone and practical involvement has not occurred, is not to be considered as a sin. For example, a person commits a sin and another comes to know about it before or after its committal and approves it, even though the approval leads to the stage of resolution but is not translated into action, it is not a sin as the resolution of an individual to commit a sin, which is not translated into action may not be considered a sin.

An approval is considered as participation in sin when it plays an active role in its planning and execution. The collective sins belong to this category. The social atmosphere and the social spirit favour the occurrence of the sin and support it. If one of the members of a society whose approval is a part of the collective will and whose decision is a part of the collective decision commits the sin, it is here that the sin of an individual becomes the collective sin. The above quoted passage of the Nahj al-balaghah which refers to the contents of the Qur'anic verse, explains the same fact. It is not merely the approval or disapproval which is regarded as participation in the intention or committal of a sin.

The Qur'an occasionally associates the acts of an earlier generation with the latter generations. For example, the action of an earlier nation, namely the people of Israel, has been associated with the Israelites of the Prophet's age, and the Qur'an says that these people deserve igno-miny and wretchedness because they slew prophets unjustly. It is not so because in the view of the Qur'an they were the offspring of the same race, but because they represented the same evil social spirit. It has been said that "human society has more dead than living. [3]

It means that those who are dead participate in the formation of every age more than the living. Therefore, it is also said that "the dead rule the living more than before." [4]

In the Qur'anic exegesis, al-Mizan, it is argued that if a society has a single soul and the same social thinking, it is as if a single indivi-dual. In this case, members of society are like the bodily organs and faculties of one organism, intrinsically and physically united, and are amalgamated in the form of a single human personality in thought and action. Their pleasures and pains are like the pleasures and pains of one person and their bliss and adversities are like the bliss and adversities of one person. This discussion is further continued on the following lines:

In its judgement on nations and societies having religious or national pre-judices or having a unique social thinking, the Qur'an regards the latter genera-tions punishable for the actions of the earlier generations. A present genera-tion is regarded accountable and punishable for the actions of those who have passed away. In the cases in which people had the same social thinking and the same social spirit, the Divine Judgement could not be otherwise. [5]

Notes

1. `Allamah Tabataba'i, al-Mizan, vol. II, p. 102.

2. Following Qur'anic verses are referred to:

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَٰذَا مِنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَّهُم مِّمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَّهُم مِّمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ

"Woe, then, to those who write the Book with their hands and then say: This is from God, so that they may take for it a small price. Therefore, woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn. "(2: 79)

ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ أَيْنَ مَا ثُقِفُوا إِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ وَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةُ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ الْأَنبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوا وَّكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ

"Abasement shall be pitched on them, wherever they are come upon, except they be in a bond of God, and a bond of the people; they will be laden with the burden of God's anger, and poverty shall be pitched on them; that, because they disbelieved in God's signs and slew the Prophets without right, that, for that they acted rebelliously and were transgressors." (3:112)

3. Auguste Comte, as quoted in Raymond Aron's Main Currents in Sociologi-cal Thought, vol. I, p. 91.

4. Ibid.

5. Al-Mizan, vol. IV, 112.

Society and Tradition

If society has real existence, it should naturally possess laws peculiar to it. If we accept the first theory about the nature of society (which we have already discussed) and reject the existence of society as a real entity, naturally we have to admit that society lacks laws which may govern it. And if we accept the second theory and believe in artifi-cial and mechanical composition of society, then we would have to admit that society is governed by laws but that its laws are confined to a series of mechanical and causal relationships between its various parts, without the distinguishing features and particular characteristics of life and living organisms.

And if we accept the third point of view, we shall have to accept, firstly, that society itself has a comparatively more permanent existence independent of the existence of individuals- although this collective life has no separate existence, and is distributed and dispersed among its individual members, and incarnates itself in their existence. It has discoverable laws and traditions more permanent and stable than those of the individuals, who are its components.

Secondly, we shall have to accept also that the components of society, which are human individuals, contrary to the mechanistic point of view, lose their independent identity-although in a relative fashion to produce an organically composite structure. But at the same time the relative independence of the individual is preserved because individual life, individual nature, and individual achievements are not dissolved totally in the collective existence.

According to this point of view, man actually lives with two separate existences, two souls, and two “selves.” On the one hand, there are the life, soul, and self of the human being, which are the products of the processes of his essential nature; on the other, there are the collective life, soul, and self which are the products of social life, and pervade the individual self. On this basis, biological laws, psychological laws, and sociological laws, together, govern human beings. But according to the fourth theory, only a single type of laws governs man, and these are the social laws alone.

Among the Muslim scholars `Abd al-Rahman ibn Khaldun of Tunisia was the first and the foremost Islamic thinker to discuss clearly and explicitly the laws governing the society in independence from the laws governing the individual. Consequently he asserted that the society itself had a special character, individuality, and reality. In his famous introduction to history, he has discussed this theory in detail. Among the modern scholars and thinkers Montesquieu (the French philosopher of the eighteenth century A.D.) is the first to discuss the laws which control and govern human groups and societies. Raymond Aron says about Montesquieu.

His purpose was to make history intelligible. He sought to understand histori-cal truth. But historical truth appeared to him in the form of an almost limit-less diversity of morals, customs, ideas, laws, and institutions. His inquiry's point of departure was precisely this seemingly incoherent diversity. The goal of the inquiry should have been the replacement of this incoherent diversity by a conceptual order. One might say that Montesquieu, exactly like Max Weber, wanted to proceed from the meaningless fact to an

intelligible order. This attitude is precisely the one peculiar to the sociologist. [1]

It means that a sociologist has to reach beyond the apparently diverse social forms and phenomena, which seem to be alien to one another, to reveal the unity in diversity in order to prove that all the diverse manifestations refer to the one and the same reality. In the same way, all the similar social events and phenomena have their origin in a similar sequence of analogous causes. Here is a passage from the observations on the causes of the rise and fall of the Romans.

It is not fortune that rules the world. We can ask the Romans, who had a constant series of success when they followed a certain plan, and an uninter-rupted sequence of disasters when they followed another. There are general causes, whether moral or physical ....which operate in every monarchy, to bring about its rise, its duration and its fall. All accidents are subject to these causes, and if the outcome of a single battle, i.e. a particular cause, was the ruin of a state, there was a general cause which decreed that that state was des-tined to perish through a single battle. In short, the main impulse carries all the particular accidents along with it. [2]

The Holy Qur’an explains that nations and societies qua nations and societies (not just individuals living in societies) have common laws and principles that govern their rise and fall in accordance with certain historical process. The concept of a common fate and collective destiny implies the existence of certain definite laws governing the society. About the tribe of Bani Israel, the Qur’an says:

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ فِي الْكِتَابِ لَتُفْسِدُنَّ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَّتَيْنِ وَلَتَعْلُنَّ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا فَإِذَا جَاءَ
وَعْدُ أُولَاهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَّنَا أُولِي بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ فَجَاسُوا خِلَالَ الدِّيَارِ وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَّفْعُولًا
ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكَرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَمْدَدْنَاكُم بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ أَكْثَرَ نَفِيرًا إِنْ أَحْسَنتُمْ أَحْسَنتُمْ
لِأَنفُسِكُمْ وَإِنْ أَسَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ لِيَسُوءُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَلِيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا
دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَلِيُتَبِّرُوا مَا عَلَوْا تَتْبِيرًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يَرْحَمَكُمْ وَإِنْ عُدتُّمْ عُدْنَا وَجَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ
لِلْكَافِرِينَ حَصِيرًا

And we decreed for the Children of Israel in the scriptures: You verily will work corruption in the earth twice, and you will become great tyrants. So when the time for the first of the two came We roused against you slaves of Ours of great might who ravaged [your] country, and it was a threat per-formed.' [After you had regretted your sins and became pious again] Then we gave once again your turn against them, and we aided you with wealth and children and mode you more in soldiery.

[Saying] If ye do good, ye do good for your own souls, and if ye do evil, it is for them. (I.e. Our laws and customs are fixed and constant, it is by this covenant that people are bes-towed with power, might, honour and constancy or subjected to humiliation and abjectness). So when the time for the second [of the judgements] came, because of your acts of tyranny and despotism, we aroused against you others [of our slaves] to ravage you, and to enter the temple even as they entered it the first time, and to lay waste all

that they conquered with an utter wasting. It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you [if ye mend your ways], but if you repeat [the crime] we shall repeat [the punishment], and we have appointed hell a dungeon for the disbelievers. (17:4-8)

The last sentence, i.e. "But if you repeat [the crime] we shall repeat [the punishment]" shows that the Qur'an is addressing all the people of the tribe and not an individual.

It also implies that all the societies are governed by a universal law.

Notes

1. Raymond Aron, Main Currents in Sociological Thought, vol. I, p. 14.
2. Ibid.

Determinism or Freedom

One of the fundamental problems discussed by philosophers, particularly in the last century, is the problem of determinism and freedom of individual as against society, or, in other words, deter-minism and freedom of the individual spirit vis-à-vis the social spirit. If we accept the first theory regarding the nature of society, and consider social structure to be merely a hypostatized notion, and believe in the absolute independence of the individual, then there will be no place for the idea of social determinism.

Because, there will be no power or force except that of the individuals, and no social force that may rule over the individual. Hence, in this theory, there is no room for the idea of social determinism. If there is any compulsion or determinism it is of the individual and operates through the individuals. The society has no role in this matter. Hence, there can be no social determinism as emphasized by the advocates of social determinism.

In the same way, if we accept the fourth theory, and consider the individual and indivi-dual's personality as a raw material or an empty pot, then the entire human personality of the individual, his intellect, and his free will would be reduced to nothing but an expression of the collective intelligence and the collective will, which manifest themselves, as an illusion, in the form of an individual to realize their own social ends. Accordingly, if we accept the idea of the absolute essentiality and primariness of the society, there will be no place left for the idea of the freedom and choice of the individual.

Emile Durkheim, the famous French sociologist, emphasizes the importance of society to the extent of saying that social matters (in fact all the human matters, as against the biological and animal urges and needs, like eating and sleeping) are the products of society, not the products of individual thought and will, and have three characteristics they are external, compulsive, and general.

They are considered to be external, because they are alien to individual existence and are imposed from without upon the individual by society. They existed before the individual came into existence and the individual accepted them under the-influence of society. Acceptance of the moral, social, and religious traditions, customs, and values by the individual comes under this category. They are compulsive, because they impose themselves upon the individual and mould the individual's conscience, feelings, thoughts, and preferences according to their own standards.

Because of being compulsive, they are necessarily general and universal. However, if we accept the third theory and consider both the individual and the society as fundamental entities-although admitting the power of the society as dominating that of the individual-it does not necessi-tate any compulsion or determinism for the individual either in human or social affairs.

Durkheimian determinism arises due to the failure to recognize the essential nature of the human being. Man's nature gives him a kind of freedom and liberty that empower him to revolt against social compulsions. On this basis, we may say that there is an inter-mediary relationship

between the individual and the society that lies between the extremes of absolute freedom and absolute compulsion (amr bayn al-'amrayn).

Although the Holy Qur'an attributes character, personality, reality, power, life, death, consciousness, obedience, and disobedience to society, it also explicitly recognizes the possibility of violation of social law by an individual. The Qur'an in this matter relies on what is termed as the (Fitrat Allah) 'Divine nature'.

In Surat al Nisa, The verse 97 refers to a group of people who called themselves "mustad'afun" (the oppressed and the weak) in the society of Mecca, and took shelter in their `weakness and being oppressed' as an excuse for shirking their natural responsibilities. In fact, they considered themselves helpless as against the social compulsion and pressures. The Qur'an says that their excuse cannot be condoned on any ground, because at least they were free to migrate from the Meccan society to another one better suited for the fulfillment of their aspirations. Elsewhere it states:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُم مَّن ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ..

"O believers! You have charge of your own souls. He who goes astray cannot injure you if you are rightly guided."(5:105)

The famous verse (7:172) regarding human nature states that man is bound by the Divine covenant to believe in monotheism (tawhid), and it has been made inherent in human nature. The Qur'an says further that it is ordained in this way so that people should not say on the Day of Judgement that "our fathers were idolaters and we did not have any other alternative except helplessly adhering to the faith of our fore-fathers." (7:173) [1]

With such a nature gifted to man by God, there is no compulsion to accept any faith contrary to the Divine will and to human nature itself.

The teachings of the Qur'an are entirely based upon the notion of human responsibility man is responsible for himself and for society. The dictum al-'amr bil ma`ruf wa al-nahy `an al-munkar (commanding others to do what is commanded by God and forbidding them from that which is prohibited by Him), is a command to the individual to revolt against social corruption and destructiveness.

This is the Qur'anic code of conduct prescribed for the individual to save society from chaos, disorder, and destruction. Tales and stories embodied in the text of the Qur'an deal mostly with the theme of the individual's revolt against a corrupt social order. The stories of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Prophet Muhammad, the Companions of the Cave (Ashab al--Kahf), the believer of the tribe of the Pharaoh, etc. deal with the same theme.

The notion of social determinism is rooted in the misconception that society in its real composition needs complete merger of its constituent parts into one another and dissolution of their plurality into the unity of the `whole'. This process is considered to be responsible for the emergence of a new reality.

Either one has to accept that the personality, freedom, and independence of the individual are real, and so negate the reality of society and social structure (as in the case of the first and the second theories regarding the nature of society and the individual), or the reality of society is to be

affirmed at the cost of the individual and his freedom and independence (as in the case of Durkheim's theory). Reconciliation between these two opposite view-points is impossible. As all the conjectures and arguments of sociology support the supremacy of society, the opposite view is necessarily rejected.

In fact, from a philosophical point of view, all forms of syntheses cannot be regarded similar. On the lower levels of nature, i.e. minerals and inorganic substances, which in philosophical terms are governed by a `simple force,' and as interpreted by the philosophers, act according to one and the same law, are synthesized in a way that they completely merge into one another and lose their individuality in the whole.

For example, in the composition of water, two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen are merged together, and both lose their individual properties. But at the higher level of synthesis, the parts usually retain a relative independence with respect to the whole. A kind of plurality in unity and unity in plurality manifests itself at higher levels of existence. As we see in man, despite his unity, a unique plurality is manifested.

Not only his lower faculties and powers preserve their plurality to some extent, but, at the same time, there is also a kind of continuous inherent opposition and conflict between his internal powers. Society is the strangest natural phenomenon in which all its constituent parts retain their individual independence to a maximum possible degree.

Hence, from this point of view, we have to accept that human beings, who are the constituent parts of a society in intellectual and volitional activity, retain their individual freedom, and, therefore, their individual existence precedes their social existence. In addition to this

fact, in the synthesis at the higher levels of nature, the generic character of the parts is preserved. The individual human being or the individual spirit is not determined by the social spirit; it rather preserves its right to think and act freely.

Note

1. Following verses are referred to :

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ۖ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ ۛ شَهِدْنَا ۛ أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَٰذَا غَافِلِينَ أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ ۖ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ

And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes! we bear witness. Lest you should say on the day of resurrection: Surely we were heedless of this. [Or you should say: Only our fathers associated others (with Allah) before, and we were an offspring after them: Wilt Thou then destroy us for what the vain doers did? (7:172-173)

Social Divisions and Polarization

Although society has a kind of unity, it is divided from within into different groups, strata and classes, which are occasionally opposite to one another. If not all, some of societies are divided into different and occasionally conflicting poles despite their apparent unity. Thus, in the words of Muslim philosophers, a specific type of `unity in plurality and plurality in unity' governs societies. In earlier chapters, while discussing the nature of the unity of society, we have elaborated what type of unity it is. Now we shall discuss the nature of its inherent plurality.

There are two well-known theories with regard to this problem. The first is the philosophy of historical materialism and dialectical contradictions. This theory, which would be discussed in detail later, is based upon the origin of private property. The societies in which the conception of private property does not exist are basically unipolar, such as the primitive communist societies or those communist societies which are likely to be formed in the future.

A society in which the right to private property. Exists is, of necessity, bipolar. Hence, society is either unipolar or bipolar. There is no third alternative possible. In bipolar societies, human beings are divided into two groups, viz. the exploiters and the exploited. Except these two opposite camps, i.e. the group of the rulers and the group of the ruled, any third group does not exist. All the social modes, such as philosophy, morality, religion, and art, may also be divided according to the class character of the two groups.

There are, therefore, two types of philosophy, morality, religion, etc., each of which bears the specific economic class character of each group. Hypothetically, if there were only one philo-sophy, one religion, and one morality prevalent in a society, it too represents the character of any one of these two classes and is imposed on the other. But it is impossible to imagine the existence of a philo-sophy, art, religion or morality without having a character independent of the economic structure of society.

According to the other theory, the unipolar or multipolar charac-teristic of society has nothing to do with the principle of private ownership. The social, ideological, cultural, and racial factors, too, are responsible for giving rise to multipolar societies. The cultural and ideological factors, in particular, play the basic role; they are not only capable of producing bipolar or multipolar societies with occasionally contradictory poles but can also create a unipolar society without necessarily abolishing the institution of private ownership.

Now we have to discuss the view of the Qur’an regarding the plurality of society. Does the Qur’an affirm or negate social plurality? And if it affirms, what is its point of view about the polarization of society? Does the Qur’an affirm the bipol4rization of society on the basis of ownership and exploitation, or does it forward some other view? The best or at least a good method for determining the Qur’anic point of view seems to be that we should first of all extract the social terminology used in the Qur’an. In the light of the nature and meaning of the Qur’anic idiom we can infer the position of the Qur’an concerning this matter.

The social terminology used in the Qur’an is of two types: some of the words are related with a particular social phenomenon such as, millah (community), shari `ah (Divine Law), shir`ah (custom), minhaj (method), sunnah (tradition), and the like. These terms are not relevant to the present discussion. But a number of terms which refer to all or some human groups may be taken into account for discovering the Qur’anic viewpoint.

These words can reveal the point of view of the Qur’an. Such terms as qawm (folk), ummah (community), nas (mankind), shu`ub (peoples), qaba'il (tribes), rasul (messenger, apostle), nabi (prophet), imam (leader), wali (guardian), mu'min (believer), kafir (unbeliever), munafiq (dissenter or hypocrite), mushrik (polytheist), mudhabdhab (hesitant), muhajir (emigrant), mujahid (warrior), sadiq (truthful), shahid (witness), muttaqi (pious), salih (righteous), muslih (reformer), mufsid (corrupter).

Aamir bil ma'ruf (one who orders to obey God's command), nahi `an al-munkar (one who forbids indecent or illegitimate deeds), `alim (learned), nasih (admonishes), zalim (cruel, oppressive, unjust), khalifah (deputy), rabbani (Divine), rabbi (rabbi), kahin (priest), ruhban (monks), ahbar (Jewish scribes), jabbar (tyrant), `ali (sublime), mustali (superior), mustakbir (tyrant, proud), mustad`af (tyrannized, oppressed), musrif (lavish, prodigal), mutraf (affluent), taghut (idols), mala ` (chieftains), muluk (kings), ghani (rich), faqir (poor, needy), mamluk (the ruled), malik (owner, master), hurr (free, liberated), `abd (slave, servant), rabb (master, lord), etc.

Furthermore, there are other words which are apparently similar to these words, such as: musalli (one who prays), mukhlis (sincere, devoted), sadiq (loyal, true), munfiq (charitable), mustaghfir (one who asks for God's forgiveness), ta'ib (penitent), abid (adorer), hamid (one who praises), etc.

But these words have been used only for the purpose of describing kinds of behaviour and not to refer to certain social groups, poles, or classes.

It is essential to study the connotation and meaning of the verses in which the terms referred to earlier are used, in particular the words related to social orientations. It is also to be seen whether the above mentioned terms can be divided into two distinct groups. And suppos-ing that these terms refer to two distinct groups, it should be deter-mined who are their referents.

For example, can all of them be classified in two groups of believers and unbelievers, according to a classification based on religious belief, or into two groups of the rich and the poor according to their economic position? In other words, it is to be analyzed whether these divisions are ultimately based on any one primary classification, and whether or not all the other sub-divisions are essentially secondary and relative. If there is only one principle of division, it has to be determined.

Some people claim that the Qur’anic view suggests a bipolar society. They say according to the Qur’an, society is divided into two classes: one is the ruling, dominating, and exploiting class, and the other consists of the ruled, exploited, and subjugated people. The ruling class consists of those whom the Qur’an calls `mustakbirun', i.e. the arrogant oppressors and exploiters. The subjugated class is of those who are called by the Qur’an `mustad'afun' (the weakened).

All other divi-sions, such as mu'min (believer) and kafir (unbeliever), muwahhid (monotheist) and mushrik (polytheist), salih (righteous) and fasid (corrupt) are secondary in nature. It means that it is tyranny and exploitation that leads to infidelity, idolatry, hypocrisy and other such evils, whereas, on the other hand, subjugation to oppression and ex-ploitation leads towards iman (faith), hijrah (migration), jihad (struggle), salih (righteousness), islah (reform) and other such qualities.

In other words, all such things which are regarded by the Qur’an as deviation and aberration in religion, morality, and deeds are rooted in the practice of exploitation and the economic privileges of a class. Similarly, the source and root of the attitudes and acts morally, religiously, and practically approved and emphasized by the Qur’an, lie in the condition of being exploited. Human consciousness is naturally determined by the material conditions of life. Without changing the material life of a people, it is not possible to bring about any change in their spiritual, moral and psychic life.

According to this viewpoint, the Qur’an perceives social conflicts as basically class conflicts. It means that the Qur’an gives essential priority to social and economic struggle over moral struggle. According to this interpretation, in the Qur’an, infidels, hypocrites, idolaters, the morally corrupt and the tyrants arise from among the groups whom the Qur’an names as mutraf (the affluent), musrif (extravagant and wasteful), mala' (ruling clique), muluk (kings), mustakbir (arrogant) and so on. It is not possible for these groups to arise from among the opposite class.

In the same way, they say, the prophets (anbiya'), messengers (mursalun), leaders (a'immah), upholders of truth (siddiqun), martyrs (shuhada'), warriors (mujahidun), emigrants (muhajirun) and believers (muminun) emerge from among the class of the oppressed and the weak. It is not possible that they may arise from the opposite class. So it is mainly istihbar (tyranny and arrogance) or istid`af (weakness, or condition of being oppressed) that mould and direct the social consciousness of the people. All the other social modes are products and manifestations of the struggle between the exploiters and the exploited, and the oppressors and the oppressed.

According to this viewpoint, the Qur’an not only considers the two above mentioned groups of people as manifestation and expression of the division of society into two classes of the mustakbirun and the mustad'afun, but it also divides human attributes and dispositions into two sets.

Truthfulness, forgiveness, sincerity, service, insight, vision, compassion, mercy, pity, generosity, humility, sympathy, nobility, sacrifice, fear of God, etc. constitute one set of positive values on the other hand, falsehood, treachery, debauchery, hypocrisy, sensuality, cruelty, callousness, stupidity, avarice and pride etc. constitute another set of values, which are negative. The first sets of attributes are ascribed to the oppressed class and the second set is considered to characterize the oppressors.

Hence, they say, oppression and subjugation not only give rise to opposite groups, but they are also the fountainheads of conflicting moral qualities and habits. The position of a class either as oppressor or oppressed is the basis and foundation not only of all human attitudes, loyalties, and

preferences, but also of all cultural and social phenomena and manifestations.

The morality, philosophy, art, literature, and religion originating in the class of oppressors always manifest and represent its character and social attitude. All of them support and justify the status quo, and cause stagnation and decadence by arresting social progress. On the other hand, the philosophy, art, literature, and religion originating from the class of the oppressed are dynamic and revolutionary, and generate new awareness.

The class of the oppressors, i.e. the mustakabirun, because of its hegemony over social privileges, is obscurantist, traditionalist, and seeks shelter under the shadow of conservatism; whereas the class of the oppressed is endowed with vision, and is anti-traditionalist, progressive, zealous, active, and is always in the vanguard of revolution.

In brief, according to the advocates of this theory, the Qur'an affirms the view that it is actually the economic structure of a society which makes a man, determines his group-identity and his attitudes, and lays down the foundation of his thinking, morality, religion, and ideology. They quote a number of verses from the Qur'an to show that what they teach is, on the whole, based upon the Qur'an.

According to this view, commitment to a particular class is the measure and test of all things. All the beliefs are to be evaluated by this standard. The claims and assertions of a believer, a reformer, and even a prophet or a spiritual leader, can be confirmed or rejected only through this test.

This theory is in fact a materialistic interpretation of both man and society. No doubt the Qur'an gives a special importance to the social allegiances of individuals, but does it mean that the Qur'an inter-prets all distinctions and classifications on the basis of social classes? In my view such an interpretation of society, man, and the world is not consistent with the Islamic world view.

It is a conclusion drawn from a superficial study of the problems discussed in the Qur'an. However, since we shall discuss this matter fully in a later chapter dealing with history under the title "Is History Materialistic in Nature?" I shall abstain from further elaboration at this point.

Nature of Society: Homogeneity or Heterogeneity?

An answer to this problem, too, as indicated earlier, is essential for every school of thought because only a discussion of this problem can throw light on an important issue whether all human societies can follow one and the same ideology, or if there must be a multiplicity of ideologies based upon various types of societies i.e. should each nation, community, civilization, and culture necessarily possess a particular ideology?

Ideology means the sum total of the general schemes and means which can lead a society towards the attainment of perfection and its summum bonum (the highest good). We also know that every species calls for specific qualities, conditions, and capacities; that which represents the `highest good' in the case of a horse is not identical with that of a sheep or a man.

Hence, if all societies assuming their objective existence--should share the same essence and nature, they could also, possibly, share a single ideology. Their mutual differences being like those among members of the same species, any living ideology can be applied to them, allowing within its framework adjustments for individual diffe-rence according to the varying aptitudes of its members. But if societies have different natures and essences, they naturally call for different programmes, plans, ideals, and varying summum bonum particular to each. In this case, one single ideology cannot be applied to all of them.

A similar problem applies to the changes and mutations of societies over long periods of time. Do societies change their nature and essence in the course of changes and mutations, in the same way as species are transformed in the process of evolution? Does such a process of transformation occur on the level of societies? Or if the social changes are like changes in the circumstance of an individual of a certain species, whose nature and generic characteristics are preserved in the midst of all changes and transitions?

The first issue is related to sociology, whereas the second one is connected with history. We shall discuss the first problem at present and postpone the discussion of the second until we take into account the nature of history.

Can sociological studies reveal whether or not there are some common characteristics among various societies? Are the differences among them only secondary and superficial, resulting from factors extraneous to the essence and nature of society, which itself remains unchanged? Or is it true that human societies are basically different in essence and nature, and even if supposedly similar from the point of view of external conditions, they function in intrinsically different ways? These alternative views are suggested by philosophy in its effort to disentangle obscurities surrounding the formal unity or plurality of things.

There is a shorter route also, and that is man himself. It is an established fact about man that Homo sapiens are the only species that has not shown any biological mutation from the very beginning of its emergence. Some thinkers say that as the process of evolution of living organisms culminated in the emergence of human being, nature altered its course and diverted the

movement of evolution from the biological to the social course, and from the process of physiological evolution to that of spiritual and intellectual development.

In an earlier chapter, while discussing the question “Is man gre-garious?” we came to the conclusion that man who is a single species- is ordained by nature itself to be gregarious and sociable. That is man's intrinsic and inherent gregariousness that manifests itself in the form of society and the collective spirit, is derived from the essential nature of the human species. Man has social inclinations because through them he can attain the kind of perfection of which he is capable.

His gregarious propensity secures for him the ground for the collective spirit, which is itself a means to attain the end self perfection. Accordingly, it is human nature itself that determines the course taken by the collective spirit. In other words, the collective spirit serves human nature. As long as man exists, human nature would carry on its activity, supporting and encouraging his social spirit. The collective spirit is derived, there-fore, from the individual spirit, which in turn is effused from human nature. Man is a single species, so human societies, also, have the same nature, substance, and essence.

However, as in case of individual, who can deviate from the course of nature and is occasionally even dehumanized, a society may also be diverted from its natural course and be dehumanized. The variety in societies is quite similar to diversity in individual morals, which are, in any case, not outside the sphere of human nature. Thus, societies, civilizations, cultures, and, finally, social spirits that govern societies, in spite of the differences in characters and forms, have ultimately a human character and not a non-human nature.

If we agree? With the fourth theory about the synthesis of society, and consider individual as only passive, receptive matter, an empty container without any content, it would be tantamount to a negation of the human nature. We may propound a hypothesis concerning diver-sity of nature and essence among societies, but this point of view in the form of Durkheimian theory is not at all acceptable; because it leaves the very fundamental question unanswered.

If the origin of the collective or social spirit does not lie inside individuals, and if it does not spring from the natural and biological aspect of human beings, then where does it come from? Does the social spirit come from absolute nothingness? Is it sufficient for the explanation of the social spirit to say that society has existed as long as man has existed?

In addition to this, Durkheim believes that social phenomena such as religion, mora-lity, crafts, art etc. are the products of its social spirit, which have been, are and would remain the expressions of the social spirit, and thus have `temporal durability' and `spatial extensibility.' This itself is a proof that Durkheim implicitly believes that all societies have a singular essence and nature, which manifests itself in the social spirit.

The teachings of Islam emphasize absolute unity of religion, and consider difference in religious codes and traditions as secondary, and not essential and primary. We also know that religion is nothing except a

programme for perfection of the individual and society. It also reveals that foundation of these teachings have been laid upon an assumption of the unity of societies. If there were various `species' of societies, then the ends of perfection and their respective means would have been also diverse, necessitating a diversity and plurality of religions.

The Qur’an repeatedly stresses that there is not more than one single faith throughout the world. There has been one religion in all regions, in all societies and at all times. According to the Qur’an, religions-in the plural form-have had no existence; only “Religion” (in its singular form) has existed. All prophets preached and taught the same faith, the same path, and the same purpose:

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّىٰ بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ ۖ أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ ۚ

“He has ordained for you the religion that He charged Noah with, and that we have revealed to thee, and that we charged Abraham with, Moses and Jesus, (saying), establish the religion and be not divided therein…..” (42:13)

The verses of the Qur’an which prove that the faith remains the same at all times, in all regions, and in the scriptures of all true prophets of God, are numerous. The difference lies only in certain rules and ordinances, according to the relative stages of development or back-wardness of societies. The logic that there is essentially no more than one religion is based on the outlook about man and society that mankind is one and a single species and those men are not different in their human essence. In the same way, human society, as an objective entity, represents a single species, not a plurality of kinds.

Societies of the Future

If the present societies, civilizations, and cultures are not to be considered as belonging to diverse species, it cannot be denied that they have different forms and colours. What about their future? Will these cultures, civilizations, societies, and nations continue to exist in their present form, or is humanity moving towards a certain unified culture, civilization, and society? Will they abandon their own specific indivi-duality in the future, in order to assume one common character-a character that is closer to their real human nature?

This problem is also associated with the problem of nature and essence of society, and the type of relationship between the collective and the individual spirits. Evidently, on the basis of the theory of man's primordial nature-according to which his social existence, his social life and, as a result, the social spirit are the means chosen by human nature to attain its own ultimate perfection it may be said that societies, cultures, and civilizations are moving towards homogeneity and unifica-tion, and ultimately would merge into one another.

The future of human societies lies in a highly developed, single and universal society, in which all positive human values shall be realized. Man shall attain true perfection and shall finally realize his own authentic humanity.

According to the Qur’an, it is evident that the ultimate rule shall be the rule of righteousness, which would lead to complete annihila-tion of falsehood and evil. Eternity belongs to the pious and the God--fearing (muttaqun).

In his Qur’anic exegesis, Al Mizan1, `Allamah Tabataba'i holds that:

Any profound examination of the conditions of the universe shows that man, as a part of the universe, shall realize his ultimate perfection in the future. The statement of the Qur’an that establishment of Islam in the world is a necessary and an inevitable matter, is just another way of saying that man shall ultimately attain to complete perfection. The Qur’an says:

مَن يَرْتَدَّ مِنكُمْ عَن دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ

“Whosoever of you turns from his religion, (know that in his stead) God will assuredly bring a people He loves and who love Him (for the purpose of communicating and for establishing God's religion).” (5:54)

Here the Qur’an aims to describe the purpose of creation of man and his ultimate future, which, in another verse, is explained in the following words:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّن بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا ۚ يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا

“God has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely make you successors in the earth, even as He made those who were before them successors, and that He will surely establish their religion for them which He has approved for them, and will give them in exchange

safety after fear (by destroying their enemies). They shall serve Me, not ascribing with me anything (as partners)..." (24:55)

Similarly in another place it states:

... أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ

"....My righteous servants will inherit the earth." (21:105)

In the same book, under the title "The Frontiers of the Islamic World are Faith, not Conventional or Geographical Borders", it is said, Islam has annulled the role of tribal and national distinctions, and denied them any effective role in the evolution of [the structure] of human society. There are two main factors responsible for these divisions. One is the primitive tribal life, which is based on genealogical associations, and the other is geographical and regional diversity.

These two main factors are responsible for division of humanity into various nations and tribes, giving rise to racial, linguistic, and colour differences. Also, these two factors are responsible for a nation's loyalty to a particular region; every nation calls its territory its homeland and is prepared to defend it in the name of `the motherland'.

Though it is a natural human urge to be identified with one's group, but it is, at the same time, opposed to the demand of man's nature that mankind should live as a `whole' or as a single unit. The laws of nature are based on bringing together scattered elements by creating harmony and establishing unity in place of diversity.

By means of this, nature achieves its ends. This fact is evident from the natural course of evolution, which shows how pri-mordial matter is transformed into different elements and then how elements are combined together to evolve plants, and then animals, and finally culminate in the emergence of man.

Although the regional and tribal diversity unifies members of a particular region or tribe and imparts them unity, it also brings one unit into confrontation against other such units. As a result, although the members of a nation have the feeling of fraternity among themselves, they tend to regard other peoples who are treated as `things' and not as human beings with hostility to them the outsiders are mere means whose value lies only in their practical utility.

This is the reason why Islam abrogated tribal and national diversity of men (which divides humanity into sections), and laid the foundation of human society on conviction and belief (in which the opportunity to discover the truth is equal for every individual), and not on race, nationality, or native soil. Even in affairs of matrimony and inheritance, Islam made common belief and conviction the criterion for human relations. 2

In the same book, under the title "The Religion of Truth is Ultimately Victorious", `Allamah Tabataba'i says:

Mankind, which has been endowed by nature with an urge to attain self -perfection and true felicity, strives collectively to achieve the highest stages of material and spiritual evolution, which it would, positively, achieve some day. Islam, the religion of tawhid (monotheism), is in fact a programme of attain-ment of such an end or summum bonum (sa`adah).

The deviations that hinder man from traversing his long path, should not lead us to a negation of his nature and of his humanity. It is the sole natural law that actually governs human nature. The deviations and faults should be considered as a kind of error in application of the natural law. The objective of attaining perfection, for which man aspires, is directed by his restless, perfection-loving nature itself-an end which he is likely to attain sooner or later one day. Some verses in Surat al-Rum (30-41), which start with the verse:

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا

And end with لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ lead us to the same conclusion that the demand of the law shall ultimately be fulfilled, and man, after wandering in different directions and experimenting with different ways, shall finally discover his own path and adhere to it.

One should not pay any attention to the opinions of those who say that Islam, like other cultural movements, has fulfilled its function as a phase in the development of human culture and is now an out-dated part of history. Islam, as we know it and as we have already discussed it, aims at the ultimate perfection of man, which in accordance with the laws of nature, has to be achieved one day.3

Contrarily, some people claim that Islam has never favoured the unity and unification of human culture and human societies. Islam has always, they say, favoured diversity and variety in cultures and socie-ties, and this diversity and plurality is not only recognized, but it is also reinforced by Islam. They say the personality, the nature, and the `self' of a nation are synonymous with its culture, which is the manifes-tation of its social spirit.

And this social spirit is moulded by the specific history of that nation, which distinguishes it from other nations, who do not share it. Nature has moulded man's specific essence history shapes his culture, and, in reality, moulds his personality, character, and his `selfhood.' Every nation possesses a particular culture compatible with its particular nature, taste, perfume, and essence. This culture not only affirms the personality of that nation, but also safeguards its distinct identity.

As in the case of individuals, whose individuality and personality is an inseparable part of his self, the loss of which means distortion of personality and alienation from one's own self, so also imposition of any other culture except the one evolved by a nation through the course of history and which affirms its selfhood, causes self alienation.

The fact that every nation has a particular sensibility, vision, orientation, preferences, tastes, literature, music, customs, eti-quette and rituals, and prefers certain ways, contrary to those ac-cepted by other nations is an outcome of its history, during which, due to various causes arising from its successes, failures, achievements, frus-trations, climate, migrations, contacts, connections, and its eminent personalities and geniuses, develops a specific culture of its own.

This particular culture moulds the national and social spirit in a particular form and in special proportions. Philosophy, science, literature, art, religion, and ethics are the sum total of various features, which through centuries of

common history, have become common characteristics of a particular group, and are synthesized in a special form, which distinguishes it from other human groups and renders it a particular identity.

Due to this synthesis `the social spirit' is born, which integ-rates the individuals of a certain group with the whole, in the same way as different parts of the body are organically interrelated and are responsible for its life. The same `spirit' not only gives a nation its independent, specific, and individual existence, but also gives it a `life' that distinguishes it in the course of history from other cultural and spiritual forms of expression.

It is because of this spirit that a particular culture and its social orientation, thought, customs, and behaviour are distinguished from those of other cultures. It is reflected in its approach to nature, life, historical events, feelings, preferences, ideals, beliefs, and even in its scientific, artistic, and technical products and achievements. The impact and imprint of its spirit is manifested in all the material and spiritual manifestations of a nation's life.

It is said that religion is a type of ideology. It is a faith which affirms certain feelings and approaches. But nationality means 'perso-nality,' which brings into existence specific distinguishing characteris-tics that are common in the spirit of the individuals who share the same social destiny. According to this view, the relationship between nationality and religion is the relationship between personality and belief.

It is said that Islam's opposition to racial discrimination and national prejudice should not be taken to mean that Islam does not accept diversity of nations in human society. The proclamation of equality by Islam does not amount to a negation of plurality of nations. On the contrary, it implies that Islam accepts the existence of various nations as undeniable natural realities. The following verse of the Qur’an:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

“O, mankind, indeed we have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah, is the most God-fearing among you...” (49:13)

Contrary to the argument of those who use it for a denial and nega-tion, actually approves and affirms the diversity of nations. Because, they say, the above mentioned verse, firstly, accepts the division of mankind according to sex (male and female), which is of course the natural division then it immediately goes on to refer to national and tribal divisions.

It shows that grouping of individuals in nations and tribes is also a natural, God-willed phenomenon, like their grouping as men and women. This proves that in the same way as Islam favours a specific relationship between man and woman, and does not intend to eliminate sexuality and its manifestations, so also it favours relations between various nations on an equal level and does not intend to negate nationalities, which are regarded as a natural phenomenon inherent in the process of creation.

Further, the fact that the Qur’an considers ta'druf (to know one another) as the purpose and philosophy of the existence of differences among,

nations, suggests that a community identifies itself and discovers itself in comparison and contrast with other nations, and it realizes its individuality and vitality vis-à-vis other nations.

Hence, they say, contrary to the unduly propagated general belief, Islam affirms nationalism in the sense of cultural heritage, and it is not opposed to cultural pluralism. What Islam negates is nationalism in the sense of racialism.

The theory (which aims at an Islamic justification of nationalism) is inconsistent for several reasons. It is primarily based upon a particular outlook of man and a specific view with regard to the essence and cons-tituents of human culture that is philosophy, science, art, morals, etc. Both of these views lack soundness.

It is presumed with regard to man that his essence is potentially blank. It is supposed to be devoid of any prior intellectual and emotional content or perceptual disposition to view his world, himself, and his role in it, even on the level of potentiality. It is assumed that human essence is equally neutral towards all modes of thought and emotion, purposes and goals. Man is assumed to be an empty container devoid of form and colour, totally subservient to that which fills it.

He acquires his `egohood,' his personality, his path, and his goal from the content that is poured into the empty vessel of his essence. He assumes any form or personality and adopts any path and goal that is bestowed upon him by the content. His content in fact the first thing that is poured into this vacuum moulds man in any form, colour, and charac-ter his `real' personality and essence being actually identical with the characteristics bestowed upon him by this content.

That is so because his `ego' or `self' is shaped and affirmed by his acquired content. What-ever is offered to him after this, which would suggest a change in his personality, colour, or shape, is only borrowed and alien stuff, because it contradicts with his first personality formed by historical accident. In other words, this theory is inspired by the fourth theory regarding the nature of individual and society. It maintains the idea of absolute primariness of society, and has been critically examined earlier.

From both philosophical and Islamic points of view, such a judge-ment regarding human nature cannot be justifiable. Man, according to his own special nature-although only potentially has a definite perso-nality, path and goal that is determined by his God-given nature. It is his very nature that determines his real self. Distortion and dehumaniza-tion of human existence are measurable only on the basis of man's essential nature, and not according to criteria based on historical fac-tors.

Every system of education and culture which is in harmony with the human nature and is helpful for its development is man's real culture, though it may not be the first culture imposed upon him by historical conditions. Any culture that does not suit human nature is alien to him, and, in a way, distorts and deforms his real nature and converts his `self' into `non-self,' even though it may be the product of national history.

For instance, the ideas of dualism and the sanctity of fire were distortions imposed on the human nature of ancient Persians, although these notions are

considered products of Iranian history. But belief in the unity of God (tawhid) and rejection of all forms of wor-ship of non-Gods signifies man's return to his real nature, even though this faith is not the product of Iranian soil and history.

Also, it has been wrongly presumed regarding human cultural material that it is a colourless and formless stuff to be moulded and shaped by history. It means that, according to this view, philosophy, science, religion, morality, and art, whatever form and colour they may assume, are genuine. But as to what colour, mode, type, or form these should have is relative, and dependent upon history. It is the history and the culture of every nation which necessitate its own special philosophy, its own system of education, religion, morality and art.

In other words, as man himself is considered as being without any specific essence and form, and who draws his identity subsequently from culture, in the same way, the principles and basic materials of human culture are also devoid of any form, colour, and expression. It is history which gives them an identity, a form, and an expression, and stamps them with its particular seal. Some have gone further to the extent of claiming that even “mathematical thinking is influenced by the particular approach of a culture.” 4

This conception is based upon the theory of relativism of human culture. We, in the Principles and Method of the Philosophy of Realism” have dealt with absolutism and relativism in regard to the principles of thought. There, we have proved that whatever is relative is concerned with subjective and practical perceptions of reality.

It is these perceptions of reality which are different in different cultures, according to the changing conditions of space and time. These percep-tions do not provide us with any test of truth or falsehood, and right or wrong, regarding the reality lying beyond them, to which they refer. But the theoretical sciences, scientific thought, and theoretical prin-ciples, which provide secure ground for philosophical and theoretical knowledge of man-like the principles of religious world outlook and the primary principles of ethics, are absolute, permanent, and non -relative. Here, I am sorry to say, we shall abstain from further prolonga-tion of this discussion.

Secondly, the claim that religion is belief and nationality is perso-nal identity, that the relation between the two is determined by the relation of faith and personality, and that Islam affirms national iden-tities as they are, and officially recognizes them, amounts to a total negation of the most important mission of religion.

The most important mission of religion, and above all that of Islam, lies in offering a world outlook on the basis of a universal system whose central idea is the belief in the unity of God (tawhid) -and in moulding the spiritual and moral personality of man on the basis of this world outlook. It seeks to cultivate and develop a new relation between the individuals and society.

Such a project necessitates the foundation of a radically new culture a culture which is human and not national. The culture which Islam offered to the world, and which is known as the Islamic culture today, was not aimed

to be a culture similar to those cultivated by other religions by assimilating more or less the elements of the previous culture of the people.

Such religions were influenced by the pre-existing culture, and in their turn influenced the society. The culture that Islam developed was peculiar in the sense that culturalization was inherent in the basic message of this religion. The message of Islam is dissociation of man from cultures unworthy of him and association with a culture worthy of him.

It affirms only that which is essentially positive in an existing culture. A religion which has nothing to do with various types of cultures, and which adjusts with varied cultures, is a religion which feeds itself upon the cultural leftover, and is satisfied with a casual, once-in-a-week visit to the church.

Thirdly, the meaning of the verse (49:13) that says:

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَى

Is not that `We have created you as two sexes,' so as to substantiate the claim that mankind is classified in various groups on the basis of sex, and is similarly divided into different nations and nationalities, and, in this way, to justify the conclusion that the verse means to say that, as the difference of the sexes is natural, an ideology should be based on affirmation of such differences and not their negation, and the dif-ferences of nationality are of the same kind as those of sex!

In fact what the verse wants to say is that `We have created you from a male and a female.' This either means that all human beings are genealogically related to and originate from one man and woman (Adam and Eve), or it means that all people are equal since they are the progeny of the same father and mother, and there should not be any discrimination.

Fourthly, the phrase لِتَعَارَفُوا , which has been used in the verse to refer to the purpose of creation, doesn't mean that nations are diversified so that `they may be distinguished from one another,' so as to justify the conclusion that all the nations should retain their specific character permanently in order to be identifiable as compared with other nations.

If the Qur’anic verse aimed at emphasizing this point, it should have used the word لِيَتَعَارَفُوا (that they may know their identity) instead of the word لِتَعَارَفُوا (that you may know one another). As those who are addressed are the individuals, the Qur’an tells them that `the divi-sions that have taken place in such a manner are inherent in the process of creation, so that you individuals may know each other by means of the national and tribal associations.' We know that the purpose of this I verse is not to preach that different nations and communities should necessarily retain their individualities, remaining independent of one another forever.

Fifthly, whatever we have described in the last chapter concerning the Islamic point of view regarding homogeneity and heterogeneity of societies is sufficient to prove that, according to Islam, the natural and creative process itself leads different societies towards the establishment of a unified society and culture, and the main programme of Islam is to establish such a

culture and such a society. It is also sufficient to reject the above mentioned view.

The concept of Mahdism (the belief in the coming of the promised Mahdi) in Islam is based upon such a view of the future of Islam, mankind, and the world. Here, we conclude our discussion on society to initiate the discussion about history.

1. Al-Mizan, vol. IV, p. 106

2. Ibid, pp. 132, 133.

3. Ibid, p. 14.

4. Spengler, the well known sociologist, as quoted by Raymond Aron's Main Currents in sociological Thought, vol. I, p. 107.

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